



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

including children passing through the children's court.

3. To furnish similar direction and assistance in the organization of special classes.

4. To initiate and direct special educational measures in behalf of exceptional pupils who cannot be assigned to special classes, schools or institutions.

This function is of extreme importance and one which remains almost completely undeveloped. Measures must and can be found which will reach the handicapped child in rural and village communities. Through special courses in normal schools, special visiting supervisors, printed manuals, training centers, school nurses and circulating auxiliary teachers, a technique can be worked out which will remove the present neglect of the handicapped child in the smaller community.

5. To administer the distribution of state aid for special classes and auxiliary education.

6. To maintain general relations with all schools conducted in connection with special state or county institutions for dependent, neglected,

defective and delinquent children.

7. To foster and direct, as far as expedient, measures of vocational guidance and supervision for the benefit of educationally exceptional or handicapped youth up to the age of eighteen or twenty.

These powers are a natural expression of the relation of the state to children and to education. It should also be recognized that they imply a responsibility to handicapped children of compulsory school age who may be attending private and non-public schools or who may not be attending school at all. This responsibility must be carefully exercised, but it cannot be evaded. As in child hygiene the most primary necessity is a registration of births, so in the welfare of exceptional school children the most elementary obligation of the state is the enumeration and registration of *all* seriously handicapped school children. Through the school census and school register over which the state has fundamental control let us find out how many school children are thus handicapped, where they are, and how badly they need our help.

The Visiting Teacher

By JANE F. CULBERT

Staff Executive of the Visiting Teacher Staff, Public Education Association, New York City

ONE of the interesting and promising developments within the public schools during recent years is the work of the visiting teacher. This work was introduced to meet a need that was felt alike by educators and social workers. The latter realized that many of the problems of juvenile delinquency, industrial inefficiency and other social maladjustments could and should be anticipated in the school. Educators were aware that even in

schools representing the most advanced methods of teaching with the auxiliary service of attendance officer and nurse, there were children who did not progress as they should, and that the efforts of the teachers were being brought to nought by undermining influences at work outside the school walls or by the faulty connection between the training within the school and the life outside. Too frequently, even, the home and school, through lack of acquaintance

and misunderstanding, have unwittingly worked against each other, thus thwarting rather than stimulating and reinforcing the best efforts of the other toward the children's development. It was realized that for the effective education of the child, as well as for the prevention of those ills of childhood—and indeed of adult life—that have made social work necessary, two conditions were essential: First, the school must comprehend the *whole child*, the child mental, physical and social; and second, the home and the school must be brought into mutual understanding and coöperation.

Someone was needed within the school system whose duty it should be to know the conditions under which the pupils live and play, and their consequent educational needs, to become acquainted with the individual child in his home and school relations, to discover handicapping factors and to bring about the adjustment of his special difficulties through the coöperation of home, school and social agencies. To assist the school to prevent later social wreckage, and make sure that each child's individual problem is seen and that his educational and social needs are met, the visiting teacher has been added to the school staff.

Those not familiar with school problems or the problems of school children have only to glance at the fact that a child spends but five or six hours a day, or less than 15 per cent of his entire year, in the school-room, to be convinced that the school cannot afford not to take into account how the out-of-school hours are spent, or fail to draw into effective coördination all the educative forces of home, school and community.

With the complexity of our modern city life, teachers may readily fail to realize the conditions under which their pupils live, eat, play, study and

work. With the large classes, too frequently the pupils are not real twenty-four-a-day Toms and Dicks, but just pupils. This should not be construed as criticism of the teacher. Lack of time and energy, pressure of class work, preparation of lesson material, after-school activities, often prevent teachers from knowing the homes of the children. The time consumed in large cities in long trips to and from school also constitutes a limiting factor. With the reduction of the size of classes and the lightening of the teaching load, and with the development of a greater social consciousness through the addition of courses in social work as part of the teacher's training, teachers will in the future, it is hoped, be able to do more friendly visiting and to become better acquainted with existing social conditions and their effect on the children. Even then, visiting teachers will be needed to adjust the difficulties and the limiting conditions which the class teacher has discovered through her home visiting. The adjustment of all but the simpler cases requires the technique of social work, as well as time for calling during school hours to see the mother alone, or at night to talk over with the family group the problem of the child; time for follow-up work, and, indeed, time to meet all the exigencies of the duties of a child's case worker.

THE RANGE OF SCHOOL PROBLEMS

The influence and opportunities of the school period cannot be over-emphasized. The school has now come to be recognized as the logical place from which to work for the prevention of delinquency and other social problems. In more than one city the work of the visiting teacher has been initiated by those who wished to push back the treatment of delinquency further than the children's court. The school has signal opportunity to detect symptoms

of child maladjustments as they appear in school dissatisfactions, poor school work, indifference, in persistently troublesome or erratic behavior, in rumors of undesirable companions or unwholesome interests, in apparent neglect, in environment or home conditions that are dangerous or predisposing to delinquency. Children showing any of these symptoms are referred to the visiting teacher by the principal or teachers, sometimes by parents or neighbors, or a social agency. In fact, the visiting teacher's major work is concerned with just such individual maladjusted or problematic children. The children who claim her attentions include those for whose failures and behavior the school cannot account, the repeater, the restive and the over-age, who are struggling for the day of their release into what appears to be the

haven of industry, the violent-tempered, the irritable, the worried and repressed, those who show tendencies to delinquency, the neglected or the over-worked.

A study recently made under the auspices of the National Association of Visiting Teachers and Home and School Visitors shows that the most frequent reasons for referring children to the visiting teachers are as found in the table below.

The study further continues:

From this summary table it is quite evident that the visiting teacher is called upon by the school to grapple with a wide range of problematic children who need an intensive and extensive study of their individual needs and capacities which it is not reasonable to expect from the class teacher.

As they come under her care they fall naturally into two large groups.

REASONS FOR REFERRING CHILDREN TO VISITING TEACHERS*

Specific Reasons for Referring Children	Total No. of V. T.'s naming this reason as occurring among their cases	Number of V. T.'s naming this reason as occurring first, second, third, etc. in order of frequency among their cases				
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1. Maladjustments in scholarship:						
(a) Subnormality.....	50	11	6	26	7	..
(b) Retardation.....	49	11	31	5	2	..
(c) Deficiency in lessons....	48	29	10	8	1	..
(d) Precocity.....	34	1	2	8	23	..
2. Adverse Home Conditions:						
(a) Poverty.....	48	26	14	4	3	1
(b) Neglect.....	47	17	19	8	3	0
(c) Improper guardianship..	39	7	8	16	5	3
(d) Immorality.....	32	0	5	8	6	13
(e) Cruelty.....	31	0	1	6	14	10
3. Misconduct:						
(a) In school.....	45	33	4	8	..	..
(b) Out of school.....	41	10	20	11	..	..
(c) Involving morals.....	38	6	16	16	..	..
4. Irregular Attendance:						
(a) Suspicious absence.....	42	17	13	12	..	..
(b) Due to home conditions	38	20	15	3	..	..
(c) Half-days absence.....	37	9	13	15	..	..

* "The Visiting Teacher in the United States," June, 1921. P. 25.

Lateness and physical condition were also given among other general reasons for referring cases.

First, there are those demanding a more thorough knowledge and understanding of the child's personality, and of the conditions under which he lives, so that the school may more intelligently meet his needs. Second, there are those needing some definite social adjustments such as a change in home conditions, treatment for physical disability, opportunity or wholesome activity.

THE APPROACH OF THE VISITING TEACHER

To meet the needs of either group, the visiting teacher's first object is to establish friendly relations with the child and the family, and to get what light she can on the child's problem. Through conversation with the mother or other members of his family, through informal, friendly interviews with the child at home or school, through observation of him in his class and at play, she finds out the important facts about his heredity, his early history experience, his home life, his attitude toward school, his play and companions, his interests and ambitions, his dislikes and his difficulties. From these she tries to discover the cause of the child's trouble and forms a plan of correction.

Sometimes the solution of the child's problem involves long and painstaking change of attitude on the part of the family toward the child. It may require a change of régime, a change from harsh to wise disciplining, increased supervision, change of diet and hours of sleeping, an increased interest in his success or failure at school. Frequently the desired result is effected by changing the child's attitude toward his own problem, through explanation of his conduct and its consequences, through encouragement and supervision, through substitution of wholesome activities for harmful, as, for instance, some stimulating form of ath-

letics to take the place of the excitement of picking pockets, or stealing junk.

COÖPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Many times the visiting teacher calls in the aid of a social organization. The lists used by visiting teachers in various parts of the country show considerable similarity. Practically all are assisted in their work by family agencies, employment bureaus, nurseries, child protective associations, probation officers and Big Brothers, recreation and playgrounds, libraries, settlement clubs, medical and psychological clinics.

Of great importance also are the adjustments made in the school. When the school sees what the actual situation is and becomes aware of the real need of the child, it can often modify requirements to the newly seen limitations: a change of class, a transfer to a special school, a shifting of emphasis from one phase of school work to another, a new approach, a closer connection of the school work with the child's outside interests. The visiting teacher constantly coöperates with the various departments of the school system and when the situation requires the service of school nurse, vocational counselor or Child Study Department, she refers the child to that particular agency.

Many times, as all case workers will anticipate, the satisfactory outcome involves the combined help of family, school and social agencies as well as the re-direction of the child's interests and energy, as the following case will illustrate:

William's teacher and parents made almost simultaneous complaints at the principal's office. The latter complained that the boy stayed out late at night, hanging on the street corners with "loafers," that he was disobedient, that he used the money given him to buy the baby's milk for cigarettes and for gambling; the teacher said

that he was doing nothing in class but making trouble, that he "wasn't interested in a blessed thing." The parents wanted to have him "put away," and the teacher wished to have him "demoted until he learned to behave."

The visiting teacher found William a tall, overgrown, awkward boy, all arms and legs, who felt as big as a man, and had no feeling but resentment against the school for refusing to give him his working papers so that he "could go to work like a man." He was in a lower grade than most boys of his age because he had come to America only a few years before. Because he had to "stay in school with the kids," he took it out on the teacher. He neglected his lessons, bothered the other boys and was a constant drag on the class. He carried his grudge out from school and tried to do all the grown-up things he could think of, and cultivated the acquaintance of the older group of "loafers." His road was leading down-hill precipitately.

The visiting teacher explained the working paper situation to the boy, found out the kind of work he wished to go into, showed him the advantage for that trade of further education, and made him see that his recent conduct had been babyish rather than manly. The teacher, of course, gave him a new start, and the parents were made to realize that the boy needed wholesome recreation and association with older boys. Arrangements were made for him to join an athletic club at a nearby settlement where he was tried out in a position of responsibility which seemed to him worthy of his age and mettle.

William's remaining seven months of school were profitable to him and not a drawback to his classmates. When he left school, he had lost the grudge and had gained a feeling of fair play and loyalty. His relation to his parents was helpful, his friends were the kind of which they approved, and his conduct no longer a source of worry.

GROWTH OF THE MOVEMENT

The first visiting teachers began work in the year 1906-1907 in New York, Boston and Hartford, Connecti-

cut. In these cities, and later in other places, as has frequently happened in other educational experiments, the impulse came from outside the school system. Private organizations—in Boston, settlements and civic organizations; in New York, settlements and the Public Education Association; in Hartford, the director of the Psychological Laboratory—saw the need of providing a specially equipped worker to help the schools, and developed and privately maintained the work until the school board became convinced of its value and incorporated it as part of the school system. In other cities, like Rochester and Mt. Vernon, New York, and Cleveland, Ohio, the work was introduced directly by the board of education. At present in all but four cities the work is part of the city public school system. The movement has grown until at present the work has been extended to twenty-nine cities in fifteen states. In some of these "school visitor" or a similar term is used instead of visiting teacher.

In 1919 the National Association of Visiting Teachers and Home and School Visitors was organized. It plans, through interchange of experience and study of methods and common problems, to develop standards of work among its professional members, and through publications and the interest of its associate members, to promote the development of the work and to assist those endeavoring to establish it in new communities.

It plans to hold an annual conference meeting alternately with the National Conference of Social Work and the National Education Association. It has recently made a survey of the work of the visiting teacher in this country, a report of which has been published by the Public Education Association of New York, under the title, "The Visiting Teacher in the United States."

Although in various places the work has differed in origin, some cities having approached it from the standpoint of community welfare and child welfare, others from that of school efficiency, and although the character of the work has naturally been modified by the original impulse and by local conditions, yet it has developed along comparatively similar lines in all places, and certain definite standards have evolved.

METHODS OF WORK

The majority of cities have adopted as the most satisfactory method, the assignment of a visiting teacher to a single school or to two or three small neighboring schools. This enables her to become identified with the interests of the school and neighborhood, and better to act as representative and interpreter of one to the other. As has been pointed out, studying the neighborhood, knowing its resources, its lacks and potentialities, its traditions, ambitions and dangers, is an essential part of the visiting teacher's work, while, as a member of the school staff, she is of course familiar with the school's facilities and possibilities.

When a visiting teacher works on the whole-city plan, she usually calls at a school on the request of the principal. When she is assigned to one school, as a rule she has daily office hours, and where her work covers several schools, she usually holds office hours at the school where her major work lies, and visits the others less regularly. The office hours are uniformly found to be of great advantage, and an office where she can see children and parents alone and hold conferences with teachers and social workers, is considered essential. Usually the visiting teacher's office is in the school building so that parents and children and teachers may find easy access to it.

In most cities the visiting teacher's

hours approximate the school day, though they cannot correspond exactly, for the nature of the work makes necessary calls at night, in the early morning, or at other irregular times, in order to find working parents or the family group at home, or to observe the neighborhood at night that she may find out important facts about the recreation and other phases of the neighborhood life.

Beyond the office hours it is hard to outline the visiting teacher's day. She has no fixed schedule or procedure. Her time has to be free to meet emergencies that constantly arise. However, part of almost every day is spent in school, conferring with the teachers about the new cases referred to her; finding out the facts of the present situation from the child's previous school history and his teacher's observations; observing certain children in their classes; hearing from the teachers about the progress of others, or the results of a new plan which may recently have been worked out together by visiting teacher and class teacher in the light of personal environmental facts which the visiting teacher has brought to the teacher's knowledge. "Reporting back" to the school and to the teacher directly the "conditions found," constitutes a very important part of every visiting teacher's work. As soon as the school's view of the child has been supplemented to include the background, there results almost immediately, a change of perspective in which factors which before loomed large seem less dominating. Further, the completion of the picture serves to individualize the child, however large the class, and "to individualize a child means seeing what he needs and trying to supply it."

A large part of the visiting teacher's day is spent in calling at the homes of the children. Sometimes the visits

are made during school hours to talk over serious problems with the mother when she is alone and comparatively undisturbed, especially such problems as might involve criticism of the family's attitude toward the child or the school. Other times, the visits are made after school so that matters may be "talked out" with mother and child and, again, at night or holidays, to find working parents or the whole family at home.

In the homes the visiting teacher frequently assumes the rôle of interpreter, explaining away misunderstanding about school requirements, interpreting the school's aims and demands and the child's needs. When these are realized, the parents give their coöperation to the school with a quickened sense of responsibility and a clearer vision of their duty. Many times the visiting teacher finds herself faced with the task of giving, in the simplest possible form, lessons in habit formation and child psychology. She has frequently to interpret to the children the attitude of their conservative parents.

Visits are also made to playgrounds and other gathering places to observe the child at play and with his mates, or to get better acquainted with him or his "gang." Frequently, though not daily, the visiting teacher confers with social agencies to work out plans for individual children or for families when the family situation is the limiting factor in the child's problem. It is the policy of the visiting teacher almost invariably to refer to social agencies all cases requiring their special assistance. She does not then close the case, but works coöperatively with the agency, keeping track of the child's school work and development and coördinating the work of the school and social agency. Much can be accomplished by close coördinating of the social agency and the school, if one has as an aim the securing of maximum

educational value for the child out of the family or special situation.

The following case shows how, out of a bad family situation, real educational capital was made for a head-strong, irresponsible girl of fourteen who hated school and thought she wished to go to work to help her family. Knowing the reaction of the home situation on the girl's school life, the visiting teacher worked out a special plan with the family agency to which she had referred the family. She advised that the money required for the family budget be paid in the form of a weekly scholarship to the girl. The conditions stipulated were that she attend school regularly and keep a budget. She was transferred to a special class and given a special course providing an unusual amount of household training—the one school subject which seemed to her to serve any useful purpose. The personal interest of the domestic science teacher was enlisted in the girl's home situation, and she not only advised about the budget but encouraged the girl to make the most of her scanty home furnishings. A tutor was provided to help with the academic subjects. Through this weekly-payment plan the girl was made a partner in the family situation, and her sense of responsibility developed. Her budget book served as the most effective arithmetic text book she had ever used. Incidentally, she learned much about food values and purchasing.

FOLLOWING UP CASES

"How long are cases followed up" is a question frequently asked. No definite time can be given: but as a rule, until the situation for which the child was referred has been corrected, or until the child seems to be sufficiently adjusted at school and home to warrant thinking that he can more than hold his own with the ordinary supervision

of the family or the social agency with which he has been connected. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult for a visiting teacher really to close a case, for she invariably retains her interest in the children as long as they remain in school, and is frequently consulted about situations as they come up.

All visiting teachers keep records of their cases. The majority use a printed form designed to take a minimum amount of time and to record those items which will be of service to the school in its treatment of the child. The items usually noted are: reasons why the child was referred; significant facts about his previous as well as current school history, his home conditions and environment, his interests and characteristics; the action taken by the visiting teacher in the home and the school, with recreational relief or other social agencies, and an estimate of the results of the case and of the fundamental trouble.

"Through individuals to the group is the approach of the visiting teacher," and as the result of her knowledge, derived from case work, new types of classes have been organized, school clubs, or other means to make the school fit the newly discovered need. Study rooms have been opened, school recreation centers organized; parents' clubs, courses in domestic training, special trade courses, school lunches and other extensions have been started as a result of the visiting teacher's view of the neighborhood. In this way her work becomes of value to the school as a whole. She acts as a scout bringing back a more definite knowledge of the lacks in the neighborhood, educational, social and moral, and of newer demands on the school that have arisen because of changing social and industrial conditions. This relation accords with the ideas of modern educators who believe that the connection between the school

and the community life cannot be too closely integrated.

On the other hand, the visiting teacher's acquaintance with the families and the neighborhood brings about social results. Through her work, various communities have been stimulated to provide scholarship funds, nurseries, community houses, homes for neglected children and other social activities. Hidden danger spots are not infrequently brought to her attention by parents who have not known what to do about the situation or have been afraid to report to the proper agency or official. In this way the work assumes an additional preventive aspect, and results in such improvements as better policing and lighting of parks, better provision for playgrounds, closing of improper movies, etc., checking of traffic in drugs to minors and the removal of similar insidious conditions.

The visiting teacher's position as a member of the school staff makes for certain advantages. She gets in touch with cases at an earlier stage than would an outsider. Teachers and parents consult her about suspicious cases which they would not feel justified in referring to a social agency. As representative of the school, the visiting teacher is free from the suggestion of philanthropy, and of all visitors she has, perhaps, the most natural approach to the home, going as she does in the interests of the child. It is a very rare thing for a visiting teacher to experience an unpleasant reception. Further, she is in a position to follow the child in school from year to year. Where the home carries a serious handicap, she may anticipate the difficulties of the younger children, help them avoid the false starts made by the older brother or sister, and also assist the school to reinforce the children against the inroads of the family handicap.

Her presence in the school means not

only that she can follow her cases from day to day at critical periods, but also that she is at hand whenever an emergency comes up in the principal's office that demands the advice of a social worker or of someone familiar with the social conditions and resources of the neighborhood. Thereby, too, loss of time is avoided in getting the case started. Her work serves to co-ordinate all the social forces of the school and community. Further, as a teacher and member of the school force, she naturally looks for the educational possibilities of every situation, and on the basis of her experience with numbers of cases she is in a position to make suggestions for changes or extensions of the school work, as has already been pointed out.

THE VISITING TEACHER'S PREPARATION

This educational possibility brings up the point of the preparation of the visiting teacher. Answers to a questionnaire sent out by the National Association of Visiting Teachers show that a majority of visiting teachers have had both teaching experience and social work. Almost all have had special training or experience in the latter. They have almost uniformly supplemented their previous experience with courses in child psychology and other branches of psychology or mental hygiene. This need has been particularly felt because many of the special school problems which gravitate toward the visiting teacher require special analysis, insight and patient understanding of behavior problems. Ability to speak a foreign language is a great advantage. A visiting teacher needs to know the nationalities of the children's parents, their customs, traditions and interests, so that she

may have a sympathetic approach.

The work has passed the experimental stage, but it is still growing in scope and method. Up to the present it has been largely concerned with maladjusted children. In certain cities, however, visiting teachers have co-operated in an attempt to get in touch with the school children before they become problems, through early study of their ability and social backgrounds.

The results of this work cannot be measured entirely in statistics. Studies made from time to time show that a large percentage of the children referred to visiting teachers have improved in conduct, attendance and scholarship. All the results, however, are not reported. Frequently they are cumulative: mothers who have been shown the reason for one child's failure remember the mistake to the profit of their younger children. Those who have studied the field of child welfare and who are turning to the school as the logical place for the detection and study of child maladjustments see in the growth of this work, great promise. They look forward to the time when each child shall be dealt with as an individual; when he will be properly graded, his task fitted to his capacity. They anticipate the time when all the forces at work upon the child may be harnessed to pull toward one goal. Then, as a natural outcome, it is hoped that retardation will become negligible; nervousness and mental disorders will be guarded against; juvenile delinquency will be reduced to a minimum, and industrial efficiency will be greatly lessened, because each child will go out, not prematurely and handicapped by inadequate training or the sense and habit of failure, but equipped and able to realize his potentialities.